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RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

In this issue of the journal, recommended articles which cited articles of the Journal of Acupuncture and Meridian Studies are selected and from the Journal of Pharmacopuncture (ISSN: 1226-4849) published in English.

(1) Complementary Therapies in Medicine, 2013, Volume 21, Issue 6, pp. 675-681

Patients with Anorexia Nervosa Receiving Acupuncture or Acupressure; Their View of the Therapeutic Encounter

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Abstract

Background: Anorexia nervosa is a serious illness with significant morbidity. The evidence base for existing psychological and pharmacological interventions to manage anorexia nervosa is not strong, and use of new adjunctive therapies that improve the effectiveness of existing treatments, and lead to improved mental health outcomes for this patient group is highly desirable. This study investigates the views of patients with anorexia nervosa receiving an acupuncture or acupressure intervention.

Method: A randomised controlled trial was conducted in Sydney, Australia. Twenty-six inpatients with a diagnosis of anorexia nervosa were randomised to a six week intervention of acupuncture or acupressure with light massage. Treatment was administered twice weekly for three weeks, then weekly for three weeks. A post treatment questionnaire was administered to explore participant views, of the study consultation. Questions examined important aspects of the clinical encounter including the, patient's perception of the practitioners' relational empathy (CARE), treatment perceptions and the, therapeutic relationship.

Results: Participants in both groups scored highly on the CARE scale assessing empathy and the, therapeutic relationship. There was no difference in the mean CARE scores for the acupuncture group [50 (SD 0.0)] and the acupressure group [49.5 (SD 0.8)]. Participants highly valued the therapeutic, encounter and in particular the characteristics of empathy, positive regard, acceptance, non, judgemental responses and trust. Having someone to talk to, being less stressed/relaxed and contact, with the study staff were also perceived to be important.

Conclusion: Study participants perceive the therapeutic relationship and empathy as important qualities of the acupuncture or acupressure intervention as an adjunct therapy for the treatment of anorexia nervosa.

Keywords: acupuncture, anorexia nervosa, therapeutic relationship

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(2) BMC Medical Research Methodology, 2011, Volume 11, Article number 79

How the Psychosocial Context of Clinical Trials Differs from Usual Care: A Qualitative Study of Acupuncture Patients

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Abstract

Background: Qualitative studies of participants' experiences in randomised clinical trials (RCTs) suggest that the psychosocial context of treatment in RCTs may be quite different to the psychosocial context of treatment in usual practice. This is important, as the psychosocial context of treatment is known to influence patient outcomes in chronic illness. Few studies have directly compared the psychosocial context of treatment across RCTs and usual practice. In this study, we explored differences in psychosocial context between RCT and usual practice settings, using acupuncture as our model.

Methods: We undertook a secondary analysis of existing qualitative interviews with 54 patients. 27 were drawn from a study of western and traditional acupuncture in usual practice (for a range of painful conditions). 27 were drawn from a qualitative study nested in an RCT of western acupuncture for osteoarthritis of the hip or knee. We used qualitative analysis software to facilitate an inductive thematic analysis in which we identified three main themes.

Results: In usual practice, starting acupuncture was more likely to be embedded in an active and ongoing search for pain relief, whereas in the RCT starting acupuncture was opportunistic. Usual practice patients reported few uncertainties and these had minimal consequences for them. In the RCT, patients experienced considerable uncertainties about their treatment and its effectiveness, and were particularly concerned about whether they were receiving real (or fake) acupuncture. Patients stopped acupuncture only at the end of the fixed course of treatment in the RCT, which was similar to those receiving acupuncture in the public sector National Health Service. In comparison, private sector patients re-evaluated and re-negotiated treatments particularly when starting to use acupuncture.

Conclusions: Differences in psychosocial context between RCTs and usual practice could reduce the impact of acupuncture in RCT settings and/or lead to under-reporting of benefit by patients in trials. New trial designs that ensure participants' experiences are similar to usual practice should minimise differences in psychosocial context and help attenuate these potentially confounding effects.

(3) Clinical Journal of Pain, 2013, Volume 29, Issue 11, pp. 982-987

Predicting Prognostic Factors in a Randomized Controlled Trial of Acupuncture Versus Topiramate Treatment in Patients with Chronic Migraine

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Abstract

Background: This study aimed to identify predictive factors of outcome in patients with chronic migraine (CM) treated with acupuncture or topiramate in a randomized controlled trial.

Methods: Sixty-six consecutive CM patients were treated with either acupuncture ($n = 33$) or topiramate ($n = 33$) in a 12-week period. Data on potential predictive factors were collected at baseline, and secondary data analysis was performed to identify factors associated with treatment response. Treatment prognosis was defined as the change in mean number of moderate/severe headache days per 4 weeks from the 4-week baseline periods.

Results: The median change in mean number of moderate/severe headache days per 4 weeks for patients with higher baseline headache days (> 20 d) was significantly greater than that for lower baseline headache days (≤ 20 d) (median \pm interquartile range: -12 ± 2 vs. -10 ± 1 d, $p = 0.01$) in acupuncture group. There was a greater change in mean number of moderate/severe headache days per 4 weeks for high moderate/severe headache days (> 20 d) than in low days (≤ 20 d) (-12 ± 1 vs. -10 ± 2 d, $p = 0.015$) in acupuncture group. patients with throbbing symptoms had better prognosis with acupuncture than those without throbbing (-12 ± 2 vs. -9.5 ± 2.5 d, $p = 0.004$). Higher score (> 5 points) in the general expectations for improvement predicted better response in both treatment groups (> 5 vs. ≤ 5 points: -12 ± 2 vs. -9 ± 2 d for acupuncture group; -10 ± 3 vs. -7 ± 4 d for topiramate group; $p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: Some variables can predict outcome in acupuncture or topiramate treatment of CM patients. Identifying predictors of prognosis of both treatments for CM may help improve outcomes in future work.

Keywords: acupuncture, chronic migraine, prognostic factors, prophylaxis, topiramate

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(4) Journal of Pharmacopuncture, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 51-58, 2014

Study of Single-dose Toxicity of Guseonwangdo-go Glucose Intramuscular Injection in Sprague-Dawley Rats

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Abstract

Objectives: This study was performed to analyze single-dose intramuscular toxicity of Guseonwangdo-go glucose pharmacopuncture.

Methods: Eighty six-week-old Sprague-Dawley rats were divided into two large groups of forty rats; Guseonwangdo-go glucose 5% and Guseonwangdo-go glucose 20% groups. Each group was sub-divided into four smaller groups of five males and five females, with the following dosages of pharmacopuncture being administered by intramuscular (IM) injection in each group: group 1 (G1, control group): 1.0 mL of normal saline solution, group 2 (G2, low-dose group): 0.1 mL, group 3 (G3, mid-dose group): 0.5 mL, and group 4 (G4, high-dose group): 1.0 mL.

Results: No mortalities or clinical signs were observed in any group. Also, no significant changes in body weights or in hematological/biochemical analyses were observed between the control and the experimental groups during necropsy or histopathology.

Conclusion: The above findings suggest that the lethal dose of Guseonwangdo-go glucose 5% and 20% pharmacopuncture administered via IM injection is more than 1.0 mL per animal in both male and female rats. Further studies on the repeated-dose toxicity of Guseonwangdo-go glucose should be conducted to yield more concrete data.

Keywords: Guseonwangdo-go, intramuscular toxicity, pharmacopuncture, single-dose toxicity

(5) Journal of Pharmacopuncture, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 59-69, 2014

Relative Apoptosis-inducing Potential of Homeopa-thic Condurango 6C and 30C in H460 Lung Cancer Cells *in vitro*

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Abstract

Objectives: In homeopathy, it is claimed that more homeopathically-diluted potencies render more protective/curative effects against any disease condition. Potentized forms of Condurango are used successfully to treat digestive problems, as well as esophageal and stomach cancers. However, the comparative efficacies of Condurango 6C and 30C, one diluted below and one above Avogadro's limit (lacking original drug molecule), respectively, have not been critically analyzed for their cell-killing (apoptosis) efficacy against lung cancer cells *in vitro*, and signalling cascades have not been studied. Hence, the present study was undertaken.

Methods: 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (MTT) assays were conducted on H460-non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) cells by using a succussed ethyl alcohol vehicle (placebo) as a control. Studies on cellular morphology, cell cycle regulation, generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS), changes in mitochondrial membrane potential (MMP), and DNA-damage were made, and expressions of related signaling markers were studied. The observations were done in a "blinded" manner.

Results: Both Condurango 6C and 30C induced apoptosis via cell cycle arrest at subG0/G1 and altered expressions of certain apoptotic markers significantly in H460 cells. The drugs induced oxidative stress through ROS elevation and MMP depolarization at 18-24 hours. These events presumably activated a caspase-3-mediated signalling cascade, as evidenced by reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), western blot and immunofluorescence studies at a late phase (48 hours) in which cells were pushed towards apoptosis.